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THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES: DEFINING SECURITY PRIORITIES
AND DEVELOPING MILITARY FORCES

Susan L. Clark

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PREFACE

This paper has been prepared by the Institute for Defense Analyses under funding from the Independent Research Program. It examines the decisions made by each of the five Central Asian successor states to create national military forces since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It also suggests some of the possible security threats each of these countries may face in the coming years. Finally, this paper identifies other countries to whom the Central Asian states are turning to meet their perceived security requirements, either in the hopes of establishing bilateral or multilateral alliances, or in the interests of obtaining military equipment, training for the nascent officer corps, or other cooperative efforts.

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SUMMARY

The emergence of newly independent states on the territory of the former Soviet Union has raised numerous questions about the domestic and foreign policy orientations of these new states. In the case of the Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), much Western analysis has been overly focused on the possible effects of Islamic fundamentalism and the developing rivalry between Turkey and Iran for influence in the region. This paper moves beyond these generalities to explore evolving military-security issues in the Central Asian states. In doing so, it seeks to avoid another common Western assumption: that the Central Asian states can be treated as one unit rather than as separate entities, much as the Soviet Union used to be treated.

The analysis that follows explores the decisions made by each of the Central Asian countries to establish their own national military forces beginning in early 1992. Not all have adopted common approaches. Nor have all five states perceived potential security threats in the same way. While there are certainly some similarities, such as problems associated with socio-economic difficulties, the ways in which these issues can affect each state's security policies and the ways in which they may be handled can differ considerably.

Following the identification of some of the security challenges each of these countries may face in the coming years, this paper then assesses emerging military-political relationships. To whom are they turning to meet perceived security requirements? With whom are they trying to develop alliances, either bilateral or multilateral? Which countries are seen as the most likely sources for military equipment, officer corps training, and other security-related contacts? Clearly, the Russian Federation remains central to each of the states for many of these considerations. But other countries and international institutions may also play a role, and within the region itself the competition between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to be the leader in Central Asia can further shape security considerations in these and the other states.

The civil war in Tajikistan, which has left tens of thousands killed and wounded and hundreds of thousands homeless, is but one example of the kinds of instability and

conflict we are likely to see in today's new world order. The Fergana valley in Uzbekistan, with its fertile land and dense multiethnic population, represents another potential hot spot in this region. Several factors, including the Soviet system's economic and ecological devastation of the Central Asian region, the Central Asian countries' inability to control flows of people and goods (such as drugs and arms) across borders, and long-standing ethnic and clan rivalries, can all combine to create an unstable environment which the new Central Asian militaries will be ill-equipped to address. While new conflicts are by no means a certainty, there is a definite need to identify what some of these conflict scenarios might be and how the Central Asian states plan to deal with them. This paper offers a preliminary examination of these issues.

THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES: DEFINING SECURITY PRIORITIES AND DEVELOPING MILITARY FORCES

With the demise of the Soviet Union, the successor states essentially split into two camps on the question of the future of the Soviet armed forces—those advocating the formation of new national armies in each state and those seeking to maintain some type of unified force, still largely run by Moscow. The five Central Asian states generally favored the latter approach until it became clear that the other states were increasingly moving toward the creation of their own national armies. The reluctance of the Central Asian states to undertake the creation of their own militaries is not surprising given their lack of a significant ethnic officer corps on which to draw, their interest in dedicating scarce economic resources to more pressing needs, and their general appreciation that they cannot effectively ensure their security independently.

This paper explores each Central Asian state's decisions to create a national military force, some of the possible security threats each will face in the coming years, and the countries to whom they are turning in order to meet their perceived security requirements: either for establishing alliances, obtaining equipment, or receiving training for their nascent officer corps. The relationship of each with Russia clearly remains a central one for many of these considerations. Of additional importance to some of these states in the context of broadening their security contacts is the development of ties with Turkey and certain other NATO countries and international institutions. Within the region itself, the competition between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to be the leader in Central Asia is also a factor shaping the others' security considerations.

The five Central Asian states are examined individually in the sections that follow. Each section includes a table of the major ethnic groups living in the particular state since the ethnic factor is an important consideration in domestic and international security issues. A map of the region is contained in Appendix A, and a table outlining the main structures of each state's military development is supplied in Appendix B.

A. KAZAKHSTAN

President Nursultan Nazarbaev was arguably the strongest proponent of retaining unified forces of all the newly independent states. Thus, even though Kazakhstan took the

40th Combined Arms Army under its jurisdiction in April 1992, Nazarbaev stressed that it would continue to be within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) forces as long as other states did not begin creating their own forces. It was only after Russia had declared its intention of establishing separate, Russian forces that Kazakhstan followed suit. In doing so, Nazarbaev decreed that the Kazakh State Defense Committee be transformed into the Ministry of Defense in May 1992, and the Committee's former chairman, Col. Gen. Sagadat Nurmagambetov, was appointed Minister of Defense.¹ In addition to the considerable conventional forces on its territory—including an Army headquarters, 4 army divisions, an air force division, and 2 regiments of air defense forces—Kazakhstan has also inherited 104 SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missiles and 40 strategic bombers from the former Soviet armed forces.

As regards control over these nuclear forces, Kazakhstan has leaned more toward Ukraine's position than that of Belarus, favoring the right to some administrative (though not operational) control over the nuclear weapons as long as they remain stationed on its territory. While all four of the new nuclear states initially supported control of all ex-Soviet nuclear forces by the CIS command, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine began to diverge in their policies as Russia increasingly moved to claim unilateral authority over these weapons regardless of where they were located. Belarus has reached agreement with Russia that all strategic forces on its soil do, indeed, belong to Russia and is seeking to have them removed even more quickly than called for under the START treaty. In contrast, Ukraine has entered into a bitter and highly visible dispute with Russia over this issue, which Kazakhstan has closely watched. Despite several Russian statements—spanning almost a year—that an agreement with Kazakhstan, similar to the one with Belarus, was “imminent,” none has been forthcoming.²

The abolition of the CIS joint command in July 1993 effectively removed any notion of unified control and placed nuclear control squarely in the hands of the Russian

¹ For additional information about Nurmagambetov and other key military leaders, see Richard Woff, *Commonwealth High Command and National Defense Forces* (Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, May 1992), pp. A33–A34.

² One of the major concerns is that strictly Russian control leaves these countries solely dependent on Russia for their security. For a more detailed discussion of Kazakh perspectives on the nuclear weapons issue (including problems associated with signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty), see Oumirseric Kasenov and Kairat Abuseitov, *The Future of Nuclear Weapons in the Kazakh Republic's National Security* (McLean, VA: Potomac Foundation, February 1993) and Kairat Abuseitov and Murat Laumulin, “Farewell to Arms?,” *Aziya International Weekly*, no. 10 (March), 1993, p. 3, translated in Joint Publications Research Service, *Arms Control* (JPRS-TAC)-93-012, pp. 9–11. For a Western perspective, see John Lepingwell, “Kazakhstan and Nuclear Weapons,” *RFE/RL Research Report*, 19 February 1993, pp. 59–61.

leaders, although the other three states do theoretically retain veto power over the use of these weapons. While Kazakhstan has not proved as accommodating as Belarus, this is not to imply that Kazakh-Russian relations on the nuclear question have been as strained as have been Ukrainian-Russian relations. Nazarbaev above all realizes the vital importance of maintaining a good working relationship with Russia for the sake of his country's stability (due above all to the high concentration of ethnic Russians living in Kazakhstan, as shown in Table 1).³ At the military-security level, Nazarbaev has argued that his country must be provided security guarantees by the United States, China, and Russia before nuclear weapons on Kazakh soil can be relinquished.⁴

**Table 1. Major Ethnic Groups in Kazakhstan,
as Percentage of Total Population**

(1989 Total Population: 16,464,464)

Ethnic Group	Percentage
Kazakhs	39.7
Russians	37.8
Germans	5.8
Ukrainians	5.4
Uzbeks	2.0
Tatars	2.0
Uighurs	1.1
Belarussians	1.1

Source: 1989 USSR Census

Perhaps even more important are the political and economic considerations: the Kazakh leadership has realized the international prestige and attention that come with the possession of nuclear weapons, and this attention can translate into various forms of international economic and technical assistance for Kazakhstan. Having used this leverage and gained what it apparently considered adequate security guarantees, the Kazakh parliament (in July 1992) was the first of the four states to ratify the START I treaty and Lisbon Protocol; the following month Chief of the Russian General Staff Viktor Dubynin

³ In fact, Nazarbaev has even raised the possibility of Kazakhstan signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a nonnuclear state but allowing Russia to station some of its nuclear forces in Kazakhstan, an arrangement parallel to the US-FRG relationship.

⁴ Iain Elliot, "East-West Debate in Alma-Ata," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 22 May 1992, p. 51.

reported that Russia and Kazakhstan had reached agreement on keeping nuclear weapons in Kazakhstan for another 7 years.⁵

In creating its own armed forces, Kazakhstan plans to incorporate both conscripts and contract personnel. Draftees with higher education will serve 12 months; those without higher education, 18 months; and those entering the Navy, 24 months. Initial contract service (for men and women) is for 2 or 3 years; there is no provision for alternative service. Like the other Central Asian states, Kazakhstan has a notable lack of ethnic Kazakh officers: There were only some 2,000 to 3,000 Kazakh officers in the entire Soviet officer corps, and almost 70 percent of all officers serving in the Kazakhstan today are Russian citizens.⁶ More officers from other states of the former Soviet Union (FSU), especially Ukrainians and especially junior officers, have been leaving Kazakhstan (partly because there is no provision for dual citizenship) than have returned, leading to a shortfall in the overall officer corps as well.⁷

In terms of force structure, plans call for ground, air, air defense, and naval forces, as well as internal troops, a presidential guard (subordinate to the President), and border forces (subordinate to the National Security Committee, made up of former KGB officials). Kazakhstan's desire for a naval force is perhaps surprising, given that the state is largely

⁵ As reported in Stephen Foye, "Russian Strategic Weapons to Stay in Kazakhstan," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 4 September 1992, pp. 41-42. It should also be noted that Kazakhstan has not yet ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), although Nazarbaev has made the commitment to do so. Among the state's concerns are (a) that the NPT may collapse in 1995, with Kazakhstan having committed itself to being a nonnuclear state and (b) that the near-nuclear states do not really believe that the nuclear powers are committed to guaranteeing their security.

⁶ For example, within the 40th Combined Arms Army, only 3 percent of the officers are ethnic Kazakhs, according to its commander, Lt. Gen. Anatoliy Ryabtsev, cited in Anatoliy Ladin, "National Armies: A View Inside," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 2 July 1992, p. 2, translated in Joint Publications Research Service, *Central Eurasia: Military Affairs* (hereafter JPRS-UMA)-92-026, p. 38. Information on the number of Kazakh officers overall is discussed in both Kazakh and Russian sources; see, for example, Baqtiyar Yerimbet, "How Many Officers Do the Kazakhs Have?," *Yegemendi Qazaqstan*, 14 February 1992, p. 3, translated in JPRS-UMA-92-018, p. 36, and Sergei Skorokhodov and Vladimir Tyurkin, "Foreign Mailbag: From All Around the Globe," *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 20 May 1993, p. 7, translated in FBIS-SOV-93-099, p. 13. The figure of Russians making up 70 percent of all officers in Kazakhstan is cited in a report by Moscow's *Mayak Radio*, 1 July 1993, translated in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Central Eurasia* (hereafter FBIS-SOV)-93-126, p. 16. The percentage may actually be higher: following a meeting between the Kazakh and German Ministers of Defense in August 1993, a German report indicated that 90 percent of the commanders (probably meaning higher ranking officers) in the Kazakh military were Russian officers. See *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 20 August 1993, p. 2, translated in FBIS-SOV-93-160, p. 47.

⁷ On the movement of officers, see, for example: Interview with Kazakhstan's Minister of Defense Gen. Nurmagambetov in "Russia Is Our Strategic Ally," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 15 June 1993, p. 2, translated in FBIS-SOV-93-116, p. 48; Col. Anatoliy Ladin, "Six Laws for the Military," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 28 January 1993, p. 1, translated in FBIS-SOV-93-021, p. 44; and statement by Kazakh Lt. Gen. Aleksei Khlestovich, reported by *Interfax*, 8 December 1992, published in FBIS-SOV-92-236, p. 36.

land-locked with access only to the Caspian Sea. The modest naval force it plans to develop will largely be dedicated to coastal and border protection as well as cooperative efforts with Russia, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan (perhaps on drug interdiction, for example). The mission of the border forces is to guard the land borders, namely those with China and Kazakhstan's southern neighbors since the border with Russia remains transparent on both sides. Border protection is an important effort in several respects, including controlling migration, illegal trading, and drug trafficking. The eventual size of Kazakhstan's overall military forces is as yet unclear; 50,000 troops appears to be the minimum acceptable level, but they will probably number about 85,000.⁸ They will, in any case, be fewer than what was inherited from the USSR (on the order of 200,000), as will the quantity of weapons and military equipment. Kazakhstan plans to sell the excess.

Defense industrial facilities in Kazakhstan are the most significant after those in the Slavic states (Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus), numbering some 50 defense enterprises, although there is a lack of repair facilities.⁹ Assuming continued close cooperation with Russia, both bilaterally and within the context of CIS collective security arrangements, Kazakhstan should be fairly well-placed to provide for its defense needs—so long as its future security threats do not emanate from Russia itself. As for future purchases of defense equipment, Defense Minister Nurmagambetov has indicated that the republic has no intention of looking for suppliers outside the former Soviet Union. More generally, Kazakhstan has reached agreements with Russia on several points, namely: Russian assistance in Kazakhstan's development of its military, training for Kazakh military personnel in Russia, cooperation between their border guards (including on manning these forces and training the officers), the use of the Emba and Sary-Shagan test sites by the Russian military for air defense and anti-ballistic missile activities, and the creation of a common defense zone. At the same time, the Kazakh leadership has asserted its independence by banning further military testing on at least four of the test sites within its territory, and reducing the number of hectares of land dedicated to military uses in the state from 17 million to 5 million. In the first of these efforts, in 1991, Kazakhstan placed a ban

⁸ The Ministry of Defense has estimated that the size of the force could range from 0.5 to 0.9 percent of the overall population of some 16.5 million, depending on economic circumstances and the extent of military danger. This would put a future force roughly between 82,000 and 150,000.

⁹ The plants have produced artillery, infantry and tank equipment, rifles, ballistic missile components, and naval equipment. Kazakhstan also produces nuclear power reactor fuel, beryllium products, and uranium ore. It has the only known plants outside Russia designed to produce materials for chemical and biological warfare.

on future nuclear weapons tests at the Semipalatinsk site; it has since been converted to a national nuclear physics research center.

Although Russia's close relations with Kazakhstan are second only to its relations with Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan have had some serious areas of dispute, most significantly over the future of the Baikonur space facility.¹⁰ Thus far, their only apparent agreement is on staffing: Baikonur's military facilities are to be jointly staffed, except for its military construction units, which are under the Kazakh Ministry of Defense and staffed entirely with Kazakh citizens.¹¹ On the issue of ownership and control, however, Russia—notably Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev—seeks to maintain Baikonur as a Russian military facility, arguing that only with Russian expertise and financing can the facility continue to function.¹² Kazakhstan rejects the idea of unilateral Russian control, insists that Baikonur belongs to Kazakhstan, and proposes joint command over the facility and its forces. It also wishes to convert the facility from a military enterprise to a civilian space research center and a (semi-)commercial launch facility. To this end, Kazakh officials have recently made proposals to Indian officials and U.S. firms to help set up an international space company. As of September 1993, Baikonur's fate remains in limbo and is likely to remain a serious point of contention between the two states for the foreseeable future. Tensions over Baikonur could add fuel to possible future Kazakh-Russian disputes, as outlined below.

Kazakhstan's heavy emphasis on security relations with Russia has not precluded it from reaching bilateral agreements with other states. Plans for cooperative efforts on intelligence sharing and on combating terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and corruption have been signed with Uzbekistan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine, as well as Russia. Among Western countries, Kazakhstan has established contacts in the defense sphere with Germany and the United States and has expressed an interest in NATO assistance as it tries to develop its armed forces. Thus, the Kazakh leadership seeks to establish quite a broad range of contacts, although at the same time it realizes that (a) current Western receptivity to playing an active role in security cooperation with Kazakhstan (or any of the Central Asian states) is fairly limited and (b) a good relationship

¹⁰ This facility is particularly important to the future of Russia's space program because it is the only geostationary earth orbit launch facility in the CIS.

¹¹ Russian military officers have complained about the inadequacies of Kazakh command over the construction troops in Baikonur, saying that the number of troops has fallen from 30,000 to 5,000 and that even basic infrastructure needs are not being met.

¹² Russian sources indicate that more than 90 percent of Baikonur's funding comes from Russia.

with Russia is paramount to its internal stability and to meeting any external security challenges (and avoiding any such challenges from Russia itself).

One way in which President Nazarbaev has sought to establish a more visible role for himself and his country on the international stage and among the Central Asian states has been his proposal to create an Asian counterpart to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). He officially presented this idea at the fall 1992 United Nations General Assembly meeting, and in March 1993 representatives from 11 Asian states, the secretariats of the UN and CSCE, and observers from Japan, Indonesia, and Thailand convened in Almaty to further explore this idea. Nazarbaev views this initiative of a "CSCA" not as an alternative to CSCE, but as a stepping stone to cooperation between the two regions, perhaps eventually in the form of a security and cooperation organization covering all of Eurasia.

The possible security threats Kazakhstan may face will be determined by both domestic policies and events beyond its borders. The very carefully balanced policies of President Nazarbaev focus on keeping peace between the heavily Russified northern part of Kazakhstan and Kazakhs in the south; Nazarbaev has not tolerated manifestations of nationalism from either Russians or Kazakhs living within the republic. His ability, and that of any eventual successor, to maintain such a balanced policy will be crucial to the well-being of the state.¹³ The greatest domestic threat to upsetting Kazakh-Russian relations is probably a serious deterioration in the state's economy, although disputes between Russia and Kazakhstan over the Baikonur space facility, for example, could also lead to heightened domestic tensions. An inability to control border traffic—involving both people and goods, such as drugs and military equipment—is a potential domestic threat, the response to which could involve collective actions with other states in the region.

Among the external developments that could affect Kazakh security are the following: increased Russian nationalism (which could lead to attempts to redefine Kazakhstan's northern border, incorporating the Russified north into Russia); instability to the south (either in the form of Islamic movements,¹⁴ other forms of political or socio-

¹³ For a discussion of the Alma-Ata (now Almaty) unrest in December 1986, when the Moscow leadership deviated from the traditional policy of maintaining a Russian-Kazakh political balance, see Susan L. Clark, "Ethnic Tensions and the Soviet Military," in Clark, ed., *Soviet Military Power in a Changing World* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 218-219.

¹⁴ Nazarbaev himself has noted that the Islamic fundamentalist threat should not be overestimated (as has generally been done in the West), but neither, he cautions, should it be completely ignored. See N. A. Nazarbaev, "Strategy of the Formation and Development of Kazakhstan as a Sovereign State," *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, 16 May 1992, pp. 3-6, translated in FBIS-SOV-92-108, p. 84.

economic instability, or Uzbek determination to assert a leading role in the region); general build-ups of military forces and bases located near Kazakh borders (including in China); and the possible disintegration of the Russian Federation (which not only would create instability on the northern border, but also would raise serious questions about any Russian ability—or willingness—to offer security guarantees, including nuclear ones, to Kazakhstan). In short, a change of leadership in either Russia or Kazakhstan that ceased to recognize the importance of accommodation in their relations could raise serious questions about a north-south divide and the future of nuclear weapons in Kazakhstan (assuming they are still located there).

The Kazakh military's role in such scenarios could frequently prove difficult to define. For example, its main task is considered to be defending the country's territorial integrity and independence. But how will it react should the threat to these ideas emanate from the Russian Federation, particularly if there is still a significant number of ethnic Russians serving in the Kazakh forces? Priority is also placed on ensuring security through collective efforts. In addition to similar questions about the Russian dimension of such efforts, collective participation in peacekeeping missions poses additional uncertainties. While the national law on military structure adopted in December 1992 allows Kazakh military forces to participate in peacekeeping operations, both the President and the Supreme Soviet must authorize their use in this capacity. In the case of peacekeepers being sent to Tajikistan, the Supreme Soviet proved quite reluctant to grant this authorization for several months, finally doing so only in April 1993. A general reluctance to send troops outside national borders (especially into dangerous situations) as well as a steadily expanding fear throughout the FSU that the Tajik conflict will turn into "another Afghanistan" were at least two of the concerns in becoming involved in this peacekeeping mission.

B. KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan has shown the least interest of any of the Central Asian states in forming its own military.¹⁵ In fact, the leadership has consistently stated that it does not have, or plan to have, either a national army or a Ministry of Defense. In August 1993, however, it did establish a General Staff, under Vice President Feliks Kulov, to coordinate

¹⁵ Interestingly, despite official statements that no national army will be established, an opinion poll conducted in February 1993 showed that 78 percent believed Kyrgyzstan should have its own army. See Bess Brown, "Central Asian States Seek Russian Help," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 June 1993, p. 85.

all state defense activities and policies.¹⁶ The State Committee on Defense (which in other FSU states has been the precursor to the Ministry of Defense), chaired by Maj. Gen. Myrzakan Subanov, now falls under the authority of the new General Staff.¹⁷ In contrast to the other successor states, Kyrgyzstan demonstrated marked reluctance even to assume jurisdiction over those military forces located on its territory: about 15,000 men in the 8th Motorized Infantry Division, an air force training center, and some air defense surface-to-air missiles. It was apparently only after Marshal Shaposhnikov applied pressure on the Kyrgyz leadership to take on this responsibility that it did so in May 1992.¹⁸

Kyrgyzstan continues to conduct drafts in the spring and fall each year, with a term of service of 18 months. Since spring 1992—when then-chairman of the State Committee on Defense Maj. Gen. Dzhanibek Umetaliyev indicated that about 65 percent of Kyrgyzstan's draftees would be required to serve outside the country's borders—conscripts have gradually acquired a greater say in where they will be sent to serve. Thus, in March 1993, President Askar Akaev decreed that conscripts have the right to choose between serving in units within Kyrgyzstan or outside of it (in the border guards or CIS strategic forces) and between military and alternative service (although parliament still has not passed the law on alternative service). Within the country, Kyrgyzstan is creating its own national guard (established in August 1992) of about 900 men and a border guard force of some 4,000. Vice President Kulov has stated that the number of forces currently located in Kyrgyzstan could be cut in half without jeopardizing the country's security. Significantly, President Akaev has embraced the notion of "armed neutrality," which asserts that Kyrgyzstan will aspire to a policy similar to that of Switzerland: It will not belong to any military blocs, it will adhere to a policy of internationally recognized neutrality, and the small number of military forces within the country will be used for emergencies such as rescues in natural disasters.

Kyrgyzstan's lack of interest in establishing a national army can be primarily attributed to two factors: its especially difficult economic situation (even by FSU

¹⁶ The reason for the creation of the General Staff has not been explicitly stated. It is possible that Kyrgyzstan felt a need to create an institution that would give it greater say over what happens to defense forces and facilities located on its soil. The worsening situation in Tajikistan may also have been a motivating factor. The selection of Kulov as its head is also notable given the controversy that has frequently surrounded him, including in his efforts to send peacekeeping forces to Tajikistan in fall 1992 (which were subsequently rejected by the Kyrgyz parliament).

¹⁷ The Committee was chaired until July 1993 by Maj. Gen. Dzhanibek Umetaliyev, who was then replaced for unknown reasons by his subordinate, Subanov.

¹⁸ Maxim Shashenkov, *Security Issues of the Ex-Soviet Central Asian Republics*, no. 14, *London Defence Studies* (London: Brassey's, 1992), p. 44.

standards) and its recognized inability to ensure its security independently. The fact that Russia provides the bulk of officers in the country further reinforces Kyrgyz attitudes that accommodation with Russia, including under the rubric of collective security, is its most likely guarantee of national security. From the standpoint of internal unrest, the most likely source of tension that could erupt into armed conflict is a confrontation between different ethnic groups (see Table 2) due to further deterioration in socio-economic conditions. Akaev has noted that the Chuy region, with a large portion of the country's one million Slavs, and the Osh region, with a significant percentage of its half-million Uzbeks, would be particularly susceptible to this scenario. A violent confrontation already erupted between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Osh in 1990. In addition, Kyrgyzstan is concerned about having an adequate border protection capability to prevent the flow of weapons, drugs, and refugees across its borders; the unchecked flow of any or all of these elements would pose serious threats to Kyrgyzstan's internal security.

**Table 2. Major Ethnic Groups in Kyrgyzstan,
as Percentage of Total Population**

(1989 Total Population: 4,257,755)

Ethnic Group	Percentage
Kyrgyz	52.4
Russians	21.5
Uzbeks	12.9
Ukrainians	2.5
Germans	2.4
Tatars	1.6

Source: 1989 USSR Census

In terms of foreign relations, Kyrgyzstan hopes to be able to find a balanced role for itself between East and West and between Russia and China. For the moment, the greatest external threat emanates from potential spill-over from the Tajikistan conflict, which Kyrgyzstan would hope to prevent—or at least quickly contain—through cooperation with Russia and other CIS states. This threat could be compounded by a Kyrgyz-Tajik border dispute over the use of water and arable land that has affected relations between the two countries since the late 1980s. Kyrgyzstan has proposed a treaty affirming the inviolability of existing borders, but Tajik representatives have rejected this idea.¹⁹ In the context of the Tajik conflict, the question of whether to participate in CIS

¹⁹ The dispute first broke out in 1988 and led to several deaths in 1989. It was one of the reasons for a delay in the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states, which did finally happen in

peacekeeping efforts in Tajikistan has sparked considerable debate within Kyrgyzstan. In fall 1992, Kulov sought to play a mediating role in this conflict and offered to send a peacekeeping force, only to have this idea soundly rejected by the Kyrgyz parliament, which argued that such efforts should be undertaken collectively by the CIS. Subsequently, in March-April 1993, a battalion of Kyrgyz forces was deployed on the Tajik-Afghan border but was withdrawn almost as soon as it was deployed.²⁰ Then in August 1993, Kyrgyzstan sent about 300 troops to this border again, joining up with Russian border guard forces already stationed there. Among other potential threats to its security, Kyrgyzstan also must be concerned about neighboring China and Uzbekistan (especially given the large Uzbek population in Osh oblast), and possible border disputes with them.

Top priority in Kyrgyzstan's security relationships certainly belongs to Russia. The two countries have signed several bilateral agreements pertaining to military issues, including on procedures for the use of Russian military installations in Kyrgyzstan; the status of servicemen from the Russian armed forces serving in Kyrgyzstan and vice versa; the supplying of troops in Kyrgyzstan with weapons, equipment, and basic living necessities; and the training of Kyrgyz officers.²¹ More generally, Subanov has noted that the republic's military doctrine has been developed (although not yet adopted by parliament) and that it focuses on close cooperation with Russia and other CIS states.

A fairly close bilateral security relationship with Russia has not, however, prevented the establishment of security contacts with others as well. Kyrgyzstan has signed the collective security treaty, which is seen as somewhat of a two-edged sword: It

mid-January 1993. See Bess Brown, "No Solution to Tajik-Kyrgyz Border Dispute," *RFE/RL News Briefs*, vol. 2, no. 4 (11-15 January 1993), p. 9. This conflict was also noted among disputes in Central Asia by Boris Z. Rumer, "The Gathering Storm in Central Asia," *ORBIS*, Winter 1993, p. 96.

²⁰ It is not clear why these forces were withdrawn so quickly. A Kyrgyz report indicated it was because Kyrgyzstan had no law on the status of Kyrgyz citizens on active duty in hot spots, while a Russian officer stationed in Tajikistan suggested it was because the troops lacked training for operating in mountainous terrain. Reported in Bess Brown, "Kyrgyz Troops Withdrawn from Tajikistan," *RFE/RL News Briefs*, vol. 2, no. 16 (5-8 April 1993), p. 9.

²¹ By implication, all military equipment in the country is supplied by Russia, partly because Kyrgyzstan does not have the money to purchase arms elsewhere. These bilateral agreements are discussed in more detail in an interview with Col. Gen. Stanislav Petrov, "Russia-Kyrgyzstan," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 14 April 1993, p. 3, translated in JPRS-UMA-93-014, p. 19 and in Sergei Knyazkov, "Russian Military Facilities to Remain in Kyrgyzstan," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 7 July 1993, p. 1, translated in FBIS-SOV-93-130, p. 40. The emphasis on the general importance of relations with Russia is also underscored, for example, by Subanov and President Akaev. See Subanov statement, reported by *ITAR-TASS*, 29 July 1993, published in FBIS-SOV-93-145, p. 50 and *Interfax* interview with Akaev, transmitted 24 February 1993, published in FBIS-SOV-93-036, p. 69.

can strengthen the prospects for defense cooperation among the signatories, but it also can contribute to the fostering of Russian imperialism. As for other bilateral security arrangements, a 1992 agreement with Uzbekistan provides for closer military cooperation and contacts, extending to the use of training grounds in Kyrgyzstan by Uzbek troops. The use of these facilities already has generated outcries of indignation in the media, while Kyrgyz government officials seemed more concerned about how the actions would be perceived in Tajikistan.²² For its part, the Kyrgyz government may have been motivated to conclude this bilateral arrangement as a means of keeping a check on one of its potential security threats. In addition to Uzbek aspirations to play a dominant role in the region (raising concerns in other states, including Kyrgyzstan, about how much it would wish to "dominate") and long-standing tensions between the two states, Kyrgyzstan must also be concerned about the Uzbek population within its boundaries. Kyrgyzstan has also reached other, less significant military cooperative arrangements with Turkey and Ukraine. In the case of officer training, a majority of Kyrgyz candidates are being trained in Russia, while Uzbekistan and Turkey are each training a smaller number.

C. TAJIKISTAN

Military-security issues in Tajikistan are obviously dominated by its ongoing civil war, which has taken the lives of anywhere from 20,000 to 70,000 people and has created hundreds of thousands of Tajik refugees.²³ Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine this conflict in detail, a brief overview is in order to set the context for the range of problems facing Tajikistan today and for the foreseeable future.

The fighting in Tajikistan began in late May 1992 after its President Rakhmon Nabiev, a former communist, agreed to turn over one-third of his government's ministerial posts to a coalition of democratic, nationalist, and Islamic groups. Nabiev's supporters in southern Tajikistan did not approve of this compromise and began actions to bring his government down. Although perhaps risking oversimplification, the two opposing sides can be broken down as follows: on the one hand, there are anti-communist, pro-democratic, and pro-Islamic supporters; they include the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, the Tajik nationalist movement Rastokhez, the Islamic Renaissance Party, and another

²² For more detail, see Brown, *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 June 1993, p. 86. One particular concern this has raised is whether Uzbekistan would use this agreement as a way of massing troops and equipment in Kyrgyzstan, including for use in Tajikistan.

²³ For a fuller discussion of the conflict, see Bess Brown, "Tajikistan: The Conservatives Triumph," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 12 February 1993, pp. 9-12 and, more recently, Leon Aron, "Yeltsin's Vietnam," *Washington Post*, 22 August 1993, pp. C1, C4.

nationalist movement, Lali Badakhshan. On the other side are pro-communist forces, many of whom were united into a Popular Front of Tajikistan, which opposes fundamentalism and the democratic opposition.²⁴

In September 1992, President Nabiev was forced to resign (at least in part because of a planned bilateral military agreement with Russia and Yeltsin's decree in August that placed CIS border troops in Tajikistan under Russian jurisdiction, raising the democratic opposition's concerns that Russia was seeking to reestablish control over Tajikistan²⁵); as a result the opposition (pro-democratic, pro-Islamic) forces gained greater control. In October 1992, the pro-communists who were in the process of taking parts of the capital of Dushanbe, were temporarily thwarted in their efforts partly due to the actions of the Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division, protecting what it then regarded as Tajikistan's legal government.²⁶ Nevertheless, by November, the pro-communists controlled most of southern Tajikistan and the coalition government resigned on 10 November. By the end of 1992, the pro-communist elements were back in "control," although it cannot be said that they control all of Tajikistan; the country remains fiercely divided.

Fighting both within the country and on the Tajik-Afghan border continues apace; especially pro-Tajik government troops have frequently been accused by organizations such as Amnesty International of gross brutality against segments of the opposition and local population.²⁷ In this fighting, both sides have sought out allies who have supplied military equipment, forces, and economic assistance. The present pro-communist government, headed by Imamali Rakhmonov, is supported above all by Russian and Uzbek forces, while the opposition has received support from the Afghan mujahedin and Iran.

In terms of the formation of a national military, the Tajik government issued a decree in mid-December 1992 to create its own armed forces based on forces subordinate to the People's Front (led by Sangak Safarov until he was killed in March 1993) and other pro-government armed formations.²⁸ In January 1993, an ethnic Russian who had

²⁴ See Brown, RFE/RL Research Report, 12 February 1993, and Arkady Dubnov, "Despite Armistice Feuding Continues," *New Times*, no. 2 (January), 1993, pp. 10-13.

²⁵ Bess Brown, "Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 25 September 1992, pp. 12-18, at pp. 14, 17.

²⁶ Brown, *RFE/RL Research Report*, 12 February 1993, p. 10.

²⁷ See, for example, Keith Martin, "Russian Soldiers Witness Tajik Atrocities," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, 1 July 1993.

²⁸ Aleksandr Karpov, "Tajikistan Has Started Forming its Own Armed Forces," *Izvestiya*, 20 January 1993, p. 1, translated in FBIS-SOV-93-013, p. 73. See also, Bess Brown, "Tajik Opposition to Be Banned," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2 April 1993, pp. 9-10. In March 1993, the People's Front militia was estimated to be some 8,000 men and the main military force behind the government. See

previously served in Uzbekistan's Ministry of Defense, Aleksandr Shishlyannikov, was appointed to head Tajikistan's Minister of Defense, with the personal approval of Uzbek President Islam Karimov. Conscripts were drafted in the first two months of 1993, and during that time Defense Minister Shishlyannikov and other officials noted that priority was being given to the formation of ground, air, and air defense forces; the border guards are under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and staffed with Tajik conscripts. By the year 2000, the plan is for Tajikistan to have an army corps of three or four brigades, an air force, air defense, and spetsnaz forces.²⁹ For the foreseeable future, priority is clearly being placed on close cooperation with Russian forces.

In addition to the government's own official development of a military force based on previously existing unofficial paramilitary forces, other paramilitary organizations favoring the opposition (especially those in Gorno-Badakhshan), largely supported and trained by Afghanistan, are clearly playing an important role in Tajikistan's internal security situation today. These opposition forces have also reportedly received weapons supplies from Iran and CIS forces (including through Tajik conscripts). The size and number of these unofficial military organizations is unclear, but a *Financial Times* article in November 1992 cited diplomats and Tajik officials who estimated the existence of about 50 private armies, and Uzbek President Karimov (who would admittedly seek to inflate the number) stated there were 15,000 Islamic opposition forces.³⁰ More recently, Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdulladzhonov has suggested that it will take some 3 years to disarm all the illegal paramilitary formations in the country, including in Dushanbe itself.³¹

In both economic and military respects, the current Tajik leadership sees its relations with Russia as paramount. For example, on the economic front Russia postponed Tajikistan's full repayment of its 1992 debt until 2000 and extended it additional credits for 1993. In the military sphere, the most significant factor has been Russia's protection of

Christopher Panico, "Uzbekistan's Southern Diplomacy," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 26 March 1993, p. 40.

²⁹ This plan was outlined by Russian Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev in January 1993, following a visit by a CIS military delegation. Reported by *Interfax*, 6 February 1993, published in FBIS-SOV-93-024, p. 9.

³⁰ The *Financial Times* figure is for paramilitary organizations on both sides of the conflict. See Steve LeVine, "Private Armies Bring Instability to Tajikistan," *Financial Times*, 2 November 1992. For Karimov's statement, see his interview in *Liberation*, 8 September 1992, p. 16, translated in FBIS-SOV-92-178, p. 36.

³¹ Interview with Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdulladzhonov in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 June 1993, p. 3, translated in FBIS-SOV-93-119, p. 47.

Tajikistan's borders with Afghanistan and China (the border forces in Tajikistan were placed under Russian jurisdiction in August 1992) and the support rendered by the 201st Motorized Rifle Division, headquartered in Dushanbe. All told, there are currently some 15,000 Russian troops stationed in Tajikistan, with more being sent. While official Russian military policy has been to observe a policy of neutrality in the conflict (and simply to protect important facilities and the borders), these Russian forces have been increasingly drawn into the escalating civil war and border conflict, both in terms of supplying government forces with equipment and in terms of sending additional troops to the region. Many of the Russian volunteer troops going to Tajikistan had previously fought in Afghanistan. Russian policy has been to have other CIS states (notably, the other Central Asian states who have signed the Collective Security treaty) also provide forces for guarding the 1,400-kilometer Tajik-Afghan border. In other words, Russia has sought quite consistently to place the effort within a multilateral, rather than bilateral, context. Aside from Uzbekistan, however, actions by these other states has so far been quite limited.³²

The Tajik government is well aware of its inability to field a military force on its own, even under ideal circumstances, let alone in today's conditions of a civil war when it has neither the time nor the money to do so; Russia is its main source of protection. Current agreements provide for the following: The 201st division is to be stationed in Tajikistan as a Russian unit until 1999 (with Russian soldiers serving in it only on a voluntary basis). Russia is to help train its officer corps and is to supply military equipment and weapons to the Tajik forces. Russia's air defense system is to protect Tajikistan against attacks from Afghanistan. And Russian troops engaged in combat operations in Tajikistan are to be legally protected and are authorized to use aircraft and missiles. Russia also furnishes virtually all the financial support for the forces located in Tajikistan (the Russian Ministry of Defense has indicated that maintaining the 201st Division and offering border protection cost 3 billion rubles in 1992).

It should be noted that Russian involvement in Tajikistan has certainly not been universally supported. Debates in both the Russian press and parliament have raised concerns about Russia being dragged into another Afghan-like quagmire, and Russian military officers stationed there (and those given orders to be transferred there) have expressed doubts about their mission: Whose interests are they supposed to protect? From

³² Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have both sent small numbers of peacekeeping forces to help protect the Tajik-Afghan border. Turkmenistan refuses to do so, and is willing to assist only in political solutions to the conflict.

the perspective of the Tajik government (let alone that of opposition forces), there appears to be dissension on whether Russian forces will—and should—remain in the country beyond 1999, at which point it is planned that Tajikistan will have established its own military.³³

Uzbekistan's military support for the Tajik government, while arguably not as extensive as that supplied by Russia, has nevertheless been absolutely vital and no less visible. To a question during an interview in June 1993 about whether aid from Uzbekistan has been commensurate with the scale of Russian aid, Prime Minister Abdulladzhanov responded: "Our relations with both Russia and Uzbekistan are equally important to us. It would be political shortsightedness to give preference to one at the expense of the other. Both Russia and Uzbekistan stood by us in the republic's hour of need."³⁴

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have concluded a treaty on cooperation which includes the stipulation that Uzbekistan will defend Tajik air space; Uzbekistan has also furnished weapons and military equipment (such as helicopters and armored equipment), some ground forces, and training for Tajik Internal troops.³⁵ Indeed, many of Tajikistan's forces are controlled directly by Uzbekistan, as is, for all intents and purposes, the northern portion of Tajikistan (Khodjent) where many Uzbeks in Tajikistan live.³⁶ (See Table 3 for a list of the major ethnic groups in Tajikistan.) Another factor sure to influence this bilateral relationship is the fact that the Tajik Defense Minister previously served in the Uzbek Ministry of Defense and received Karimov's approval to serve in Tajikistan.

³³ For example, Tajikistan's Foreign Minister Rashid Alimov has stated that Russian troops will not be stationed in Tajikistan after 1999 because Tajikistan will have its own forces by then, whereas its Defense Minister, Aleksandr Shishlyannikov (an ethnic Russian), has argued that the Russian presence should continue since the desirability of its presence is not determined solely by Tajikistan's absence of its own forces.

³⁴ In Abdulladzhanov, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 June 1993, translated in FBIS-SOV-93-119, p. 46.

³⁵ There have been reports as well of Belarus supplying weapons and ammunition to the Tajik government.

³⁶ Based on discussion with Nancy Lubin, September 1993.

**Table 3. Major Ethnic Groups in Tajikistan,
as Percentage of Total Population**

(1989 Total Population: 5,092,603)

Ethnic Group	Percentage
Tajiks	62.3
Uzbeks	23.5
Russians*	7.6
Tatars	1.4
Kyrgyz	1.3

*At least half have since left Tajikistan

Source: 1989 USSR Census

The way in which the current civil war eventually is resolved will obviously have a fundamental impact on the security concerns Tajikistan will face in the future: What will be its relationship with Afghanistan? Will a Russian military presence still be welcomed in the country?³⁷ Will there be a merger of Tajiks living in Afghanistan with (parts of) Tajikistan itself, such as the southern (Dushanbe) region? Might such an alliance then find itself in opposition to a northern Tajikistan (Khodjent)-Uzbekistan alliance? Or will Tajik-Uzbek relations become more confrontational? In this connection, new forms of internal unrest are a distinct possibility given that the majority of the Uzbeks, who comprise almost one-fourth of the total population in Tajikistan, live in the north and that many of them have shown some interest in federating with Uzbekistan. Because of the heavy degree of Tashkent's involvement in this region of Tajikistan already, it is not difficult to envisage the exacerbation of ethnic tensions here. If such unrest does erupt, it could then spread beyond Tajikistan proper, with Uzbeks laying claim to parts of Khodjent oblast and Tajiks vying for Samarkand and Bukhara. Either for such ethnic reasons or others (such as regional economic differences), the divide between the more industrialized and urbanized north and the more agricultural south could become a source of domestic tension. Finally, the potential for renewed (or new) border disputes, such as the one between Tajik and Kyrgyz villages over water rights and arable land, has been noted in the section on Kyrgyzstan.

³⁷ Russia's desire to maintain a military presence in Tajikistan will be determined partly by whether there will be a civilian Russian population to protect: the 1989 census gave the number of Russians living there as almost 400,000, but there has been a significant exodus since then; estimates as of mid-1993 place the size of this population anywhere between 70,000 and 200,000. The other major consideration will be whether Tajikistan will continue to be viewed as a buffer state or forward basing area in Russian military-strategic plans, including for the retention of the air defense system.

D. TURKMENISTAN

President Saparmurad Niyazov has demonstrated a distinct lack of interest in collective CIS security efforts (or the joining of any other form of military bloc) and, instead, has pursued bilateral arrangements with Russia to help meet Turkmenistan's defense and security needs. From the start, the leadership has recognized that the forces located in Turkmenistan, inherited from the Soviet military, far exceed the country's requirements. As of April 1993, there were 60,000 troops, including 4 motorized divisions, 2 air force regiments, and air defense capability. The leadership has not sought to control all of them, but among the motivating factors for establishing at least some national forces were the abolition of the Turkestan Military District (when Uzbekistan decided to create its own military) and a belief that Turkmenistan's proposed share of the CIS defense budget was too high. As a result, Niyazov announced the formation of a Ministry of Defense Matters in January 1992, and Danatar Kopekov was selected as its head.³⁸ Kopekov's background—a former oil worker and party official, and since 1991 Chairman of the KGB in Turkmenistan—and that of two of three of his senior deputies (also either former oil workers or party officials) illustrate the country's lack of ethnic officers.³⁹ Despite this lack of military expertise, no officials from the Central Asian Military District were selected for positions in the republic's Ministry of Defense.

Turkmenistan plans to reduce the number of forces on its territory, probably to less than half its current size. Its military draft provides for service of 18 months by those conscripts without higher education, 12 months for those with higher education, and 2 years for service in the navy.⁴⁰ Only those who volunteer are to be sent outside the republic's borders, to serve in the strategic forces. There are provisions for 2-year alternative service, but only for health or family (not religious) reasons. While better than 90 percent of the soldiers stationed in the country were Turkmen even in mid-1992, 95 percent of the officers were Slavic.⁴¹ Officers may be citizens of (and swear loyalty to) either Turkmenistan or Russia.

³⁸ In July 1992, it was renamed the Ministry of Defense and Kopekov became Minister of Defense.

³⁹ Woff, *Commonwealth High Command and National Defense Forces*, p. A-36.

⁴⁰ While the creation of a navy was certainly not a top priority, Turkmenistan believed that if the Caspian Flotilla were divided up, it should receive its share, based on its contribution to the creation of the Soviet Navy. Turkmenistan and Russia subsequently reached agreement in mid-March 1993 that the former would have its own navy, initially under joint command, in the Caspian Sea region.

⁴¹ Interview with Turkmenistan First Deputy Minister for Defense Affairs Maj. Gen. Bekdzhani Niyazov, in *Frunzevets*, 16 April 1992, translated in JPRS-UMA-92-021, p. 37; Lt. Gen. V. Zhurbenko, "Location of Duty Assignment—Turkmenistan," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 6 May 1993, translated in FBIS-

The most significant development in Turkmen defense affairs was the signing in July 1992 of a bilateral agreement with Russia that established a joint Russo-Turkmen command. Of the 60,000 troops in Turkmenistan, 15,000 are under direct Russian command (air force and air defense units), and the remainder are under joint bilateral command. Turkmenistan has pledged to provide basic living necessities (such as housing and utilities) and Russia is to provide logistical support and general financing. The agreement also stipulates that the forces in Turkmenistan cannot be involved in military action without the consent of both countries. This original agreement called for the two countries to share the financing of all military forces in Turkmenistan for a 5-year transition period. A subsequent agreement in September 1993, however, stipulates that beginning in January 1994, Turkmenistan will pay all costs of maintaining military forces on its soil. This accord also effectively grants Russia basing rights in Turkmenistan and allows Russian citizens to perform their military service in Turkmenistan.

Another accord, reached in August 1992, provided for the presence of Russian border troops for the 5-year transition stage (and the option for automatic extension of another 5 years), during which time they would also assist in the creation of Turkmenistan's own border guards. For the training of its future officer corps, Turkmenistan places the greatest emphasis on cooperation with Russia,⁴² but it also plans to turn to other CIS states and Turkey (where 300 men are already being trained) as well as to develop some of its own training capability. In this, and all military-security issues, the Turkmen leadership stresses the development of bilateral rather than multilateral (such as CIS) arrangements.

The level of perceived external threat at least for the near term appears to be quite low in Turkmenistan. President Niyazov has stated that he cannot foresee a threat to his country for at least 10 years, and that the Tajik war poses no threat because Turkmenistan is immune to Muslim fundamentalism.⁴³ He has also ruled out the possibility of Turkmenistan's participation in any joint military actions in Tajikistan, calling for political solutions instead. Within the country, the combination of Niyazov's strong authoritarian

SOV-93-089, p. 58; Shashenkov, *Security Issues of the Ex-Soviet Central Asian Republics*, p. 46; and Brown, *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 June 1993, p. 86.

⁴² In August 1993, the two states initialed an agreement on the training of Turkmenistan's military personnel in Russian military schools; this agreement also addressed the status of Russian citizens serving in the Turkmen Armed Forces, as noted above. Reported by ITAR-TASS on 13 August 1993, published in FBIS-SOV-93-156, p. 6.

⁴³ Brown, *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 June 1993, p. 87.

leadership, a more ethnically homogeneous population (see Table 4), and good economic prospects portend a more stable situation than that faced in other Central Asian states. If the government continues to offer subsidies to keep prices on consumer goods and services cheap (or even free, as in the case of utilities), the likelihood of domestic unrest—particularly in light of the tight control over any opposition political forces—appears quite limited for the time being.

**Table 4. Major Ethnic Groups in Turkmenistan,
as Percentage of Total Population**

(1989 Total Population: 3,522,717)

Ethnic Group	Percentage
Turkmen	72.0
Russians	9.5
Uzbeks	9.0
Kazakhs	2.5
Tatars	1.1
Ukrainians	1.0

Source: 1989 USSR Census

Above all, to continue to provide for its security and stability, Turkmenistan seeks avenues for developing its economy, notably its sizable natural gas reserves. Iran, with whom Turkmenistan has established the closest relations outside the FSU, is likely to be an important player. Both Iran and Turkey have been competing for gas pipeline and railway deals with Turkmenistan, although only Turkey appears to have reached any agreement about military-security cooperation (including the training of officers, noted above). More generally, Turkmenistan desires defense accords with its neighbors to rule out the prospect of territorial disputes. Turkmenistan has pursued most of its security arrangements in order to be able to adhere to a fairly isolationist approach: It does not wish to be involved in others' disputes (including peacekeeping) and does not want any other state involved in its own affairs. The development of its own, small force is largely meant to ensure that these principles can be maintained.

E. UZBEKISTAN

Of the Central Asian states, Uzbekistan moved the most quickly in taking the first steps to establish its own military forces. In January 1992, it created a national guard, based on its own Ministry of Internal Affairs troops, and later that month the Supreme Soviet placed military units and schools located in the country under Uzbek jurisdiction.

These units included a motorized rifle division, two air force regiments, and one air defense regiment. Still in early 1992, President Karimov signed a decree to establish border guard units under the authority of the Uzbek National Security Service and subordinated CIS border guards to this new authority. Men serving in Uzbekistan who had already sworn an oath of loyalty to the USSR were not required to swear another one to Uzbekistan; new personnel are to swear loyalty to the people and president of Uzbekistan, not to the state. The Uzbek leadership also acted quite quickly to recall its personnel serving in other FSU states, although many of the reported "several thousand" Uzbek officers have apparently failed to return, creating a dearth of officers, especially among the junior ranks.⁴⁴

Plans call for the creation of a force of 25,000 to 35,000 men, in the form of ground forces (the main component), air force, air defense, spetsnaz, and a national guard. Like many other states of the FSU, the length of service for conscripts is 12 months for those with higher education and 18 months for those without such education. There are provisions for contract service personnel (including women) as well, with an initial contract period of 3 years. The law on alternative service, adopted in October 1992, permits this service only for family reasons, not because a draftee refuses to participate in military service. The majority of conscripts are to serve within Uzbekistan, although those who wish to serve in another republic may do so with parental permission and under the supervision of the Uzbek armed forces. In fact, a report in *Izvestiya* in early July 1993 noted that Uzbekistan had agreed to send 10,000 of its soldiers to serve in Germany.⁴⁵ In addition, there are provisions for some draftees to be sent to other CIS states for special training, not to exceed 6 months, because Uzbekistan does not have the capability to train personnel in all specialties.⁴⁶

Recognizing that even in mid-1992, 90 percent of its enlisted personnel were of the indigenous nationality while more than 70 percent of the officer corps serving in Uzbekistan were Russian-speaking, the government has adopted several measures to

⁴⁴ On the decree recalling personnel (who can continue to serve in these other states, under contract), see Maj. V. Kovalenko, "From Tashkent: Parliament Announces a Spring Recall," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 24 March 1992, p. 3, translated in JPRS-UMA-92-011, pp. 77-78. On the development of its officer corps, see Lt. Col. Valentin Astafev, "Some Still Dream of Naval Infantry," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 16 July 1992, p. 2, translated in JPRS-UMA-92-029, p. 47.

⁴⁵ Igor Andreev and Nikolai Burbyga, "The Withdrawal of Troops Proceeds Normally," *Izvestiya*, 8 July 1993, translated in JPRS-UMA-93-026, p. 3. According to John Lepingwell in "Is the Military Disintegrating from Within?," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 June 1993, p. 14, there are currently 5,000 Uzbeks serving in the Western Group of Forces in Germany.

⁴⁶ As outlined in U. Mirzayarov, "Army Service in the Homeland," *Pravda Vostoka*, 7 May 1992, p. 1, translated in JPRS-UMA-92-020, p. 49; and in an interview with Col. Arslan Khalmatov in *Krasnaya zvezda*, 20 May 1993, p. 2, translated in FBIS-SOV-93-102, p. 55.

address the inevitable problems arising from this situation.⁴⁷ It is offering Uzbek language classes for officers and Russian language classes for conscripts, and it plans to transition to using the Uzbek (rather than Russian) language only gradually—over 5 to 6 years. Furthermore, the first person appointed a General in the Uzbek army was an ethnic Russian, and the government intends for the forces to continue to be multiethnic.⁴⁸

While many in Central Asia see Uzbekistan as a potential threat to their security (and Kazakhstan as a counterweight to this threat) in light of Uzbekistan's desire to play an assertive role in the region, there have been some attempts apparently to assuage these concerns through the signing of security-related bilateral agreements, for instance with Kyrgyzstan in August 1992 and Kazakhstan in January 1993.⁴⁹ The absolutely critical level of Uzbek support for the present Tajik government has already been noted as well.

From President Karimov's viewpoint, the growth of pro-Islamic forces and the threat of Tajikistan's conflict spreading to his country are the greatest concerns for Uzbek security. It is quite legitimate to question, nevertheless, whether Karimov is simply using Islamic fundamentalism as an excuse for his repression of all opposition in Uzbekistan and as a means of diverting attention away from other problems within the country. Indeed, for this second poorest of the Central Asian states, of at least equal importance to Uzbekistan's security is the need for it to cope with its socio-economic problems in order (hopefully) to avoid internal unrest, particularly among its ethnic groups (see Table 5).

⁴⁷ As discussed by Uzbek Minister for Defense Matters Lt. Gen. R. Akhmedov, in Astafev, *Krasnaya zvezda*, 16 July 1992, translated in JPRS-UMA-92-029, p. 46; and "To Assist Instructors of Groups for Social-Humanitarian Studies for Officers and Warrant Officers," *Vatan Pavar*, 7 July 1992, p. 3, translated in JPRS-UMA-92-033, p. 31. Nevertheless, the Uzbek Minister of Defense reportedly indicated that he was willing to replace 80 percent of the existing officer corps with national cadres. See Igor Zhukov, "Turkmenistan Is Ready to Create a Ministry of Defense," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 January 1992, translated in JPRS-UMA-92-003, p. 34.

⁴⁸ Astafev, *Krasnaya zvezda*, 16 July 1992, translated in JPRS-UMA-92-029, pp. 46-47.

⁴⁹ The agreement with Kyrgyzstan provides for day-to-day defense cooperation and closer defense ties generally, while the accord with Kazakhstan covers cooperation in the areas of intelligence and combating terrorism, drug trafficking, crime, and corruption.

**Table 5. Major Ethnic Groups in Uzbekistan,
as Percentage of Total Population**

(1989 Total Population: 19,810,077)

Ethnic Group	Percentage
Uzbeks	71.4
Russians	8.3
Tajiks	4.7
Kazakhs	4.1
Tatars	2.4
Karakalpaks	2.1

Source: 1989 USSR Census

The rise of ethnic nationalism, partly connected with the Uzbek leadership's emphasis on blaming previous leaders (i.e., Russians) for the country's economic and ecological devastation,⁵⁰ has already precipitated the departure of a significant portion of the republic's Slavic population. Furthermore, Maxim Shashenkov has explicitly highlighted the link between economic development and domestic order: "If living standards are further impaired, . . . growing popular dissatisfaction over economic and social problems may trigger widespread unrest in Uzbekistan."⁵¹ Should this occur, the potential for its effect on neighboring regions is enormous, and the most likely tinderbox is the densely populated Fergana valley. Shashenkov further notes: "Were Uzbekistan to explode, the conflagration would embrace much of the region: the republic lies in the heart of ex-Soviet Central Asia and Uzbek minorities live in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan";⁵² to that list can also be added Afghanistan. In addition to socio-economic difficulties furnishing a spark for such flames, it is also possible that Karimov's heavy-handed quashing of any form of political opposition may backfire, giving greater appeal to more radical opposition elements. As for the military's role in these scenarios, the current political leadership would clearly hope that national forces would be able to prevent or contain domestic unrest.

Within the realm of security agreements with other states, Uzbekistan has established accords with its Central Asian neighbors (probably partly to assure these neighbors of its peaceful intentions, as noted above, and partly to ensure a central role for itself in the region) and has moved toward a closer alliance with Russia. This latter

⁵⁰ This policy is particularly evident in connection with the "cotton affair." See Cassandra Cavanaugh, "Uzbekistan Reexamines the Cotton Affair," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 18 September 1992, pp. 7-11.

⁵¹ Shashenkov, *Security Issues of the Ex-Soviet Central Asian Republics*, p. 21.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

development is largely due to the ongoing conflict in Tajikistan and Karimov's belief (not necessarily shared by all, particularly in light of the worsening situation in Tajikistan) that no one besides the Russians can guarantee security and stability in the region. Moreover, the two countries have discussed such possibilities as military-technical cooperation, the joint use of military facilities, and Russia's training of Uzbek personnel.

Uzbekistan has also had some security-related contacts with Turkey, and in the broader context of its foreign relations priorities the republic has placed great emphasis on Turkey's role. For example, it is the only Central Asian state to have Turkey, not Russia, represent its interests abroad. From an economic perspective, the Chinese model seems to be more appealing to the Karimov leadership than Turkey's, however. In short, there has been an attempt to pick and choose what is most appealing and useful from a variety of states, a pragmatic approach that will probably continue to apply to Uzbekistan's emerging defense relationships as well.

F. CONCLUSIONS

From each of these brief country overviews, it is apparent that the Central Asian states have neither adopted a uniform approach in addressing their security efforts nor perceived possible security threats in the same way. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify certain commonalities, both in their military development and security concerns. As these states proceed along the path of creating independent armed forces, all are focusing on the desirability of more mobile forces, with modern equipment. Most face problems (either technical or financial) in being able to maintain these forces and equipment. In contrast to the Slavic states, the Central Asian republics do not face a shrinking pool of eligible conscripts; rather, the problem (which virtually all the FSU states share) is the unwillingness of young men to serve in the armed forces, in the face of a continuing decline in military morale and prestige. Thus, even though draftees are no longer sent outside their native states' borders involuntarily, incidents of draft evasion and desertion remain high. In addition, the poor health of people living in Central Asia means more conscripts are likely to have legitimate medical problems.

The fact that a majority of Central Asian conscripts who served in the Soviet armed forces did so in the construction troops deprives these states of the ability to draw on previously developed military expertise among the population. This lack of expertise is, of course, especially apparent in the ethnic officer corps; all these states face the problem of having to rely on Slavic (particularly Russian) officers to lead their forces. For now, Russia and the Central Asian states have a mutual interest in Russian officers serving in

these new militaries: Russia does not have the housing or positions for them to fill back home, and the Central Asian states need their expertise. But current parliamentary regulations stipulate that officers serving outside Russia will retain their benefits and rights as members of the Russian armed forces only until October 1993 for senior ranks (colonels and generals) and until end-December 1994 for others. This raises a serious question about the leadership of the Central Asian militaries as of 1995, assuming no change in Russian legislation.

Certain common features related to security threats in the region have been noted throughout this paper. It is necessary to underscore just two points. First, the large youth populations in the Central Asian states can offer fertile ground for instability and uprisings, particularly as economic difficulties are combined with the need for more jobs for these young people and as anger over environmental devastation (and consequent health disasters) grows. Second, most potential future disputes seem likely to develop out of socio-economic problems in the region. As they are manifested, they can assume a variety of forms, including: conflicts arising as a result of economic differentiation among the Central Asian states, as some are better able to exploit their natural resources than others; disputes over access to arable land, water, and housing; interethnic and clan rivalries; power politics within a given country or between countries; and the inability to control border traffic—of both people and goods such as drugs.

Given the quite modest current plans for military force development in the Central Asian states, the militaries themselves will not necessarily pose a significant threat to each other. But neither will they truly be able to provide for their countries' security without external assistance. Should new forms of instability and conflict emerge in this region, it is not clear what capabilities from which countries will be brought to bear. At a minimum, it is necessary to examine in greater detail the range of potential threats and their implications for U.S. interests. The hope must be that any violence be contained at a low level, although the inability to deal with the situation in Tajikistan today does not offer much reason for such hope.

APPENDIX A
THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION

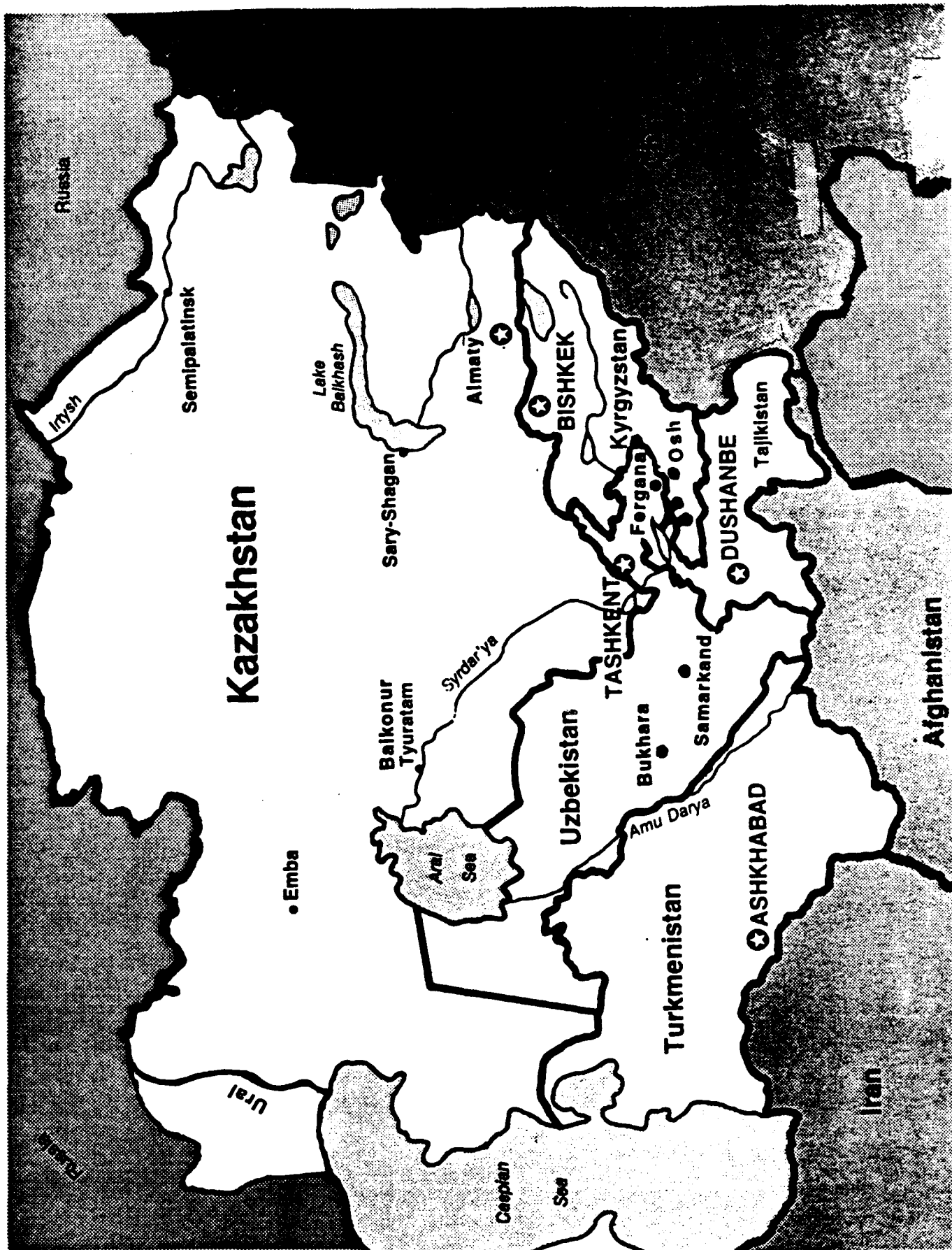


Figure A-1. The Central Asian Region

APPENDIX B
MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN
STATES

Table B-1. Military Developments in the Central Asian States

Country	Primary Military Organization and Leader	Planned Forces*
Kazakhstan	Ministry of Defense (estab. May 1992) Col. Gen. Sagadat Nurmagambetov	85,000 Ground, air, air defense, naval Internal and border troops; Presidential guard
Kyrgyzstan	General Staff (estab. August 1993) Vice President Feliks Kulov State Committee on Defense Maj. Gen. Myrzakan Subanov	8,000 - 10,000, includes: —those serving outside Kyrgyzstan —National forces (5,000) in Border troops and National guard
Tajikistan	Ministry of Defense (estab. December 1992) Maj. Gen. Aleksandr Shishlyannikov	30,000-40,000 Ground (3-4 brigades), air, air defense, spetsnaz Border troops under Russian jurisdiction, staffed with Tajik conscripts
Turkmenistan	Ministry of Defense (estab. July 1992) Lt. Gen. Danatar Kopekov	25,000 Air and air defense forces under Russian control Ground, naval forces under joint command with Russia Border troops under Russian command for 5-year transition, while national border troops being established
Uzbekistan	Ministry of Defense (estab. early 1992) Lt. Gen. Rustam Akhmedov	25,000-35,000 Ground, air, air defense, spetsnaz National guard, Internal and border troops, National Security Service

*Most of these states have yet to clearly define the future size of their force; these numbers are therefore only best-guess estimates.

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